

Response ID ANON-URZ4-5FBC-N

Submitted to Fast-track approval applications
Submitted on 2024-05-03 11:16:59

Submitter details

Is this application for section 2a or 2b?

2A

1 Submitter name

Individual or organisation name:
Meridian Energy Limited ('Meridian')

2 Contact person

Contact person name:
Andrew Guerin

3 What is your job title

Job title:
Environmental Manager

4 What is your contact email address?

Email:
s 9(2)(a)

5 What is your phone number?

Phone number:
s 9(2)(a)

6 What is your postal address?

Postal address:

PO Box 10840
The Terrace
Wellington 6143

7 Is your address for service different from your postal address?

No

Organisation:

Contact person:

Phone number:

Email address:

Job title:

Please enter your service address:

Section 1: Project location

Site address or location

Add the address or describe the location:

The project site is near Waiinu Beach and Waitootara, South Taranaki and 42km north-west of Whanganui. Refer uploaded site location map.

File upload:
Site Location - Waiinu Energy Park.pdf was uploaded

Upload file here:

No file uploaded

Do you have a current copy of the relevant Record(s) of Title?

Yes

upload file:

WaiinuEnergyParkTitles.zip was uploaded

Who are the registered legal land owner(s)?

Please write your answer here:

s 9(2)(a)

[Redacted text block]

Detail the nature of the applicant's legal interest (if any) in the land on which the project will occur

Please write your answer here:

Meridian has successfully secured executed Agreements with all eleven landowners mentioned above and pertaining to the land parcels constituting the Project. These Agreements enable Meridian to undertake all elements of the Project including any access, construction and ongoing operation.

Section 2: Project details

What is the project name?

Please write your answer here:

Waiinu Energy Park.

What is the project summary?

Please write your answer here:

Waiinu Energy Park is a proposed renewable energy park which includes wind turbines, solar array, battery energy storage system (BESS), transmission and grid connection, access roads and associated supporting project infrastructure.

What are the project details?

Please write your answer here:

The project is one of the largest economic renewable energy development opportunities in New Zealand that Meridian is aware of. The project location is an excellent use of the natural resources in the region and is located near to a part of the national electricity grid with capacity to export the planned generation. Waiinu Energy Park will supply renewable energy to the National Grid for the benefit of New Zealand homes and businesses.

The project site includes two areas of 4,700 ha and 600 ha, to be connected by a transmission corridor. The site will consist of wind turbines, solar arrays, battery energy storage system (BESS), permanent meteorological mast, internal substation, underground cable reticulation, overhead transmission lines, terminal substation, access roads, and supporting site infrastructure including service building and site office. The transmission corridor between Site A and Site B will be approximately 3km to 5km in length and easements will be required for an estimated corridor width of 50m.

Temporary construction infrastructure will include portacom buildings, construction compound and laydown area, water storage, and concrete batching plant.

Construction will involve earthworks for recontouring and trenching of cable trays, wind turbine foundations, solar array mounting structures, BESS, transmission support structures, site infrastructure including a site operations and maintenance building, the widening of access tracks, and associated on-site wastewater treatment system.

The Project is expected to bring significant economic benefits at a local, regional, and national level. It is one of the largest economic renewable energy development opportunities in New Zealand that Meridian is aware of with the capital investment to construct the project being around s 9(2)(b)(ii) , based on the maximum generation capacity of the site. Further, due to the scale of the project, significant investment will be required during operations

with estimated annual operational costs of s 9(2)(b)(ii) per year for the lifetime of the project.

The Project will create a substantial number of additional jobs during the construction period, with an estimated 450 to 550 direct full-time equivalent jobs required. It is estimated the indirect employment benefit to the region would be an additional 60 full-time equivalent jobs. The economic benefit from additional employment in the area will continue during operations with up to 20 direct full-time equivalent jobs for the lifetime of the project.

New Zealand is confronted with an unprecedented need to develop new renewable generation to electrify the country and the economy. An estimated 1,250GWh of additional renewable energy will need to be generated each year until 2050. This is equivalent to building a new West Wind farm project every five months until 2050. To put this into perspective, over the past 30 years leading up to 2020, an average of 380GWh of new renewable energy was commissioned annually. This means that New Zealand will need to ramp up its construction efforts by approximately 300% each year until 2050 to meet these ambitious targets.

The scale and size of Waiinu Energy Park will significantly contribute to New Zealand meeting these targets. The Project would contribute massively to the electrification of New Zealand and its economy, generating up to 2,000GWh of electricity per year. This is enough electricity to power the equivalent of 290,000 average New Zealand homes. Therefore, the proposed project will provide significant national and regional benefits, through assisting New Zealand to meet government-stated renewable electricity generation targets.

Describe the staging of the project, including the nature and timing of the staging

Please write your answer here:

The project will be developed as a single project through effects assessments, consenting, detailed design, construction, and operation.

Construction of the project is planned to proceed in two stages. The purpose is to enable efficient and safe construction of the project. The first stage will include the wind turbines, internal substation, terminal substation, transmission line, and supporting infrastructure. Stage 2 will include the solar array. BESS infrastructure could be built during Stage 1 or Stage 2, or in phases during both stages.

Stage 1:

- Civil works including installation of erosion and sediment controls, site access tracks and other supporting infrastructure.
- Installation of electrical infrastructure including internal reticulation cables, internal substation, terminal substation and transmission line.
- Wind turbine installation and commissioning.
- BESS infrastructure

Stage 2:

- Solar array installation and related supporting infrastructure.
- BESS infrastructure.

What are the details of the regime under which approval is being sought?

Please write your answer here:

Meridian anticipates seeking an application under Fast-track Approval Bill via listing in Schedule 2A and the following regimes:

- Resource Management Act 1991 -Resource consent(s)
- Wildlife Act 1953 - Authority to do anything otherwise prohibited
- Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 - Archaeological Authority

If you seeking approval under the Resource Management Act, who are the relevant local authorities?

Please write your answer here:

- South Taranaki District Council
- Whanganui District Council
- Taranaki Regional Council
- Horizons Regional Council

What applications have you already made for approvals on the same or a similar project?

Please write your answer here:

Meridian gained a Wildlife Permit from The Department of Conservation to handle lizards for surveying purposes in October 2023.

Is approval required for the project by someone other than the applicant?

No

Please explain your answer here:

Meridian has successfully secured executed Agreements with all eleven landowners mentioned above and pertaining to the land parcels constituting the Project. These Agreements enable Meridian to undertake all elements of the Project including any access, construction and ongoing operation.

If the approval(s) are granted, when do you anticipate construction activities will begin, and be completed?

Please write your answer here:

Milestone Dates:

Activity Milestone Date

Start of detailed design and procurement April 2025

Fast-track application June 2025

Fast-track approval December 2025

Detailed design and procurement December 2025 - March 2027

Stage 1 Final Investment Decision (FID) March 2027

Stage 1 Construction start March 2027

Stage 1 Operational (First Power) September 2028

Stage 1 Construction Complete and Full Power December 2029

Stage 2 FID December 2029

Stage 2 Construction Start January 2030

Stage 2 Operational (First Power) October 2030

Stage 2 Construction Complete and Full Power June 2032

Section 3: Consultation

Who are the persons affected by the project?

Please write your answer here:

South Taranaki District Council

Whanganui District Council

Taranaki Regional Council

Horizons Regional Council

Te Kaahui o Rauru (TKoR)

Detail all consultation undertaken with the persons referred to above. Include a statement explaining how engagement has informed the project.

Please write your answer here:

Refer attached consultation record.

Upload file here:

Consultation record - Waiinu Energy Park.pdf was uploaded

Describe any processes already undertaken under the Public Works Act 1981 in relation to the land or any part of the land on which the project will occur:

Please write your answer here:

No Public Works Act 1981 process has been undertaken - Meridian is not a requiring authority.

Section 4: Iwi authorities and Treaty settlements

What treaty settlements apply to the geographical location of the project?

Please write your answer here:

The wider area that the project site is located within is part of the rohe of Ngaa Rauru Kaitahi. The Ngaa Rauru Kaitahi Claims Settlement Act 2005 and Deed of Settlement with the Crown, do not make references directly applicable to the project site. The wider project setting includes sites and features that are important to Ngaa Rauru Kaitahi including Marae, waterbodies and the coastal environment.

Are there any Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019 principles or provisions that are relevant to the project?

No

If yes, what are they?:

Are there any identified parcels of Māori land within the project area, marae, and identified wāhi tapu?

Yes

If yes, what are they?:

Potentially yes. The NZ Archaeological Association site recording map shows archaeological sites, some of which are wāhi tapu within the project area. Earthworks and the siting of structures will avoid known wāhi tapu which Meridian will gain knowledge of through engagement with Ngāa Rauru Kaitiaki. We will also have Iwi monitors on site during earthworks and will abide by an accidental discovery protocol.

Is the project proposed on any land returned under a Treaty settlement or any identified Māori land described in the ineligibility criteria?

No

Has the applicant has secured the relevant landowners' consent?

No

Is the project proposed in any customary marine title area, protected customary rights area, or aquaculture settlement area declared under s 12 of the Māori Commercial Aquaculture Claims Settlement Act 2004 or identified within an individual iwi settlement?

No

If yes, what are they?:

Has there been an assessment of any effects of the activity on the exercise of a protected customary right?

No

If yes, please explain:

Upload your assessment if necessary:

No file uploaded

Section 5: Adverse effects

What are the anticipated and known adverse effects of the project on the environment?

Please describe:

Refer attached.

Upload file:

Anticipated and known adverse effects.pdf was uploaded

Section 6: National policy statements and national environmental standards

What is the general assessment of the project in relation to any relevant national policy statement (including the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement) and national environmental standard?

Please write your answer here:

Refer attached.

File upload:

National policy statements and national environmental standards assessment of the project.pdf was uploaded

Section 7: Eligibility

Will access to the fast-track process enable the project to be processed in a more timely and cost-efficient way than under normal processes?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

The Project will deliver infrastructure with significant regional and national benefits. Consenting major infrastructure projects requires a balancing of the social, cultural, and economic benefits of a project to be assessed in relation to temporary and permanent environmental effects.

Meridian is currently seeking consents for two other renewable generation developments – a solar farm in Ruakākā (Northland) and a wind farm at Mt Munro (Wairarapa). Applications were submitted in May 2023 (Mt Munro) and September 2023 (Ruakākā) and to date (April 2024), neither project has had a hearing and decisions have not been made on either project. More generally, consenting of renewable generation is taking longer and longer.

Specifically in the case of Waiinu Energy Park there are four relevant councils which means four different sets of plans and consenting frameworks that need to be navigated.

It is anticipated that the Fast-track process will result in quicker decisions which will enable Meridian to more quickly deliver the required pipeline of renewable electricity projects throughout New Zealand to electrify the energy use. This will ensure Meridian is able to provide a continuous supply of construction work to key skilled staff and contractors which will help sustain the New Zealand construction industry.

Considering Meridian's recent experience of the consenting process for renewable energy projects, it is anticipated that progress through the fast-track process could accelerate consent approval by more than 18 months. This would accelerate the project development timeframe and reduce development expenditure, improving the overall project economics. More timely consent approval would enable the significant investment planned during construction to be brought forward and the national and regional benefits of the project during construction and operation to be realised sooner than otherwise would be achieved.

What is the impact referring this project will have on the efficient operation of the fast-track process?

Please write your answer here:

Waiinu Energy Park is consistent with the purpose (section 3) of the Fast-track and will comply with the process outlined (subpart 2). Meridian will ensure that the timeframes set for projects in the Fast Track Bill will be met and will follow the Schedule 2A process therefore supporting efficient operation of the process.

The project uses technologies that are mature and well understood and its actual and potential effects will be accurately assessed and managed. The scheduling of the project will be an exemplar for operation of the fast-track process.

Has the project been identified as a priority project in a:

Central government plan or strategy

Please explain your answer here:

The whole electricity system operates under a competitive market model, so there is no centrally planned list of generation projects for the industry. However, it is noted that this project is highly consistent with applicable policies for electricity and climate change. Furthermore, the project is directly consistent with New Zealand's national and international commitments in relation to climate change and supports the achievement of the targets in the Country's Emission Reduction Plan (ERP) and Paris Obligations. The proposed Waiinu Energy Park development is not specifically referred to in any plan or strategy – it is however consistent with Central and Local Government direction as outlined below:

Central government plan or strategy:

NPS-REG – Waiinu Energy Park puts into effect the objective and associated policies of the NPS to develop, operate, maintain renewable electricity generation activities throughout New Zealand.

Local government plan or strategy:

Horizons One Plan RPS – includes several objectives and policies that provide for the establishment, operation, maintenance and upgrading of infrastructure and an increase in the use of renewable energy resources in the region. This is in line with the NPS-REG. The Taranaki RPS has similar provisions.

District Plans – STDC and WDC district plans have a supportive policy framework in providing for new and existing renewable energy generation activities whilst ensuring adverse environmental effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Sector plan or strategy New Zealand Energy Strategy:

The strategy will support the electrification of New Zealand's economy, and address strategic challenges in the energy sector,. As of November 2023, the "Government's 2050 vision for energy and industry is for Aotearoa New Zealand to have a highly renewable, sustainable, and efficient energy system that is accessible and affordable, secure and reliable, and supports New Zealanders wellbeing. It has committed to reaching net zero for long-lived gases by 2050, set a target that 50% of total energy consumption will come from renewable sources by 2035, and has an aspirational target of 100% renewable electricity by 2030." Waiinu Energy Park is consistent with this Strategy.

Central government infrastructure priority list:

Rautaki Hanganga o Aotearoa New Zealand Infrastructure Commission 2022–2052 Strategy – One of the matters the Strategy focuses on is electrification, enabling a new-zero carbon emissions Aotearoa. It acknowledges clean electricity is key to that goal, and that over the next 30 years we'll need to build significantly more low-emissions electricity generation. The proposed Waiinu Energy Park development is consistent with this Strategy.

Emissions Reduction Plan:

The Emissions Reduction Plan includes targets and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Waiinu Energy Park will directly give effect to many of these including "accelerate development of new renewable electricity generation across the economy"

Will the project deliver regionally or nationally significant infrastructure?

Regional significant infrastructure

Please explain your answer here:

The project is a large proposal that makes a significant positive contribution to secure, least cost, renewable electricity generation. It strongly aligns with the achievement of nationally significant infrastructure development.

Waiinu Energy Park could generate up to 2,000GWh of electricity per year. This is enough electricity to power the equivalent of 290,000 average New Zealand homes - 14% of the private dwellings in New Zealand.

Waiinu Energy Park is expected to bring significant economic benefits at a local, regional, and national level. It is one of the largest economic renewable energy development opportunities in New Zealand that Meridian is aware of with the capital investment to construct the project being around s 9(2)(b)(ii), based on the maximum generation capacity of the site. Further, due to the scale of the project, significant investment will be required during operations with an estimated annual operational cost of s 9(2)(b)(iii) per year for the lifetime of the project.

Waiinu Energy Park will also create a substantial number of additional jobs during the construction period, with an estimated 450 to 550 direct full-time equivalent jobs at the peak of construction activities. It is estimated the indirect employment benefit to the region would be an additional 60 full-time equivalent jobs.

The local community will benefit socially and economically during operations as the project will provide jobs to support ongoing operations and maintenance for the estimated 35-year lifetime of the project. Up to 20 direct full-time equivalent jobs will be created for the operational lifetime of the project.

Will the project:

contribute to a well-functioning urban environment

Please explain your answer here:

Waiinu Energy Park will increase the supply of renewable energy in New Zealand. Energy is essential to modern households and its role is often irreplaceable to activities and society. In this regard a secure, least cost and renewable electricity supply is vital to a functioning urban environment, housing and essential human needs.

Will the project deliver significant economic benefits?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

The project will result in a number of local, regional and national benefits. At a national level the project will contribute significantly to New Zealand's need for more electricity to meet forecast demand. The project will generate clean, reliable and cost-effective electricity to support New Zealand and its economy.

Waiinu Energy Park would contribute massively to the electrification of New Zealand's economy, generating up to 2,000GWh of electricity per year. This is enough electricity to power the equivalent of 290,000 average New Zealand homes - 14% of the private dwellings in New Zealand.

Waiinu Energy Park is expected to bring significant economic benefits at a local, regional, and national level. The project is one of the largest economic renewable energy development opportunities in New Zealand that Meridian is aware of with the capital investment to construct the project being around s 9(2)(b)(ii), based on the maximum generation capacity of the site. Further, due to the scale of the project, significant investment will be required during operations with an estimated annual operational cost of s 9(2)(b)(ii) per year for the lifetime of the project.

During the construction period, the project will provide significant employment opportunities. Construction experience for this type of project is normally a 7 day a week activity and includes shift work. Accordingly, the project will provide an intense period of economic and employment activity. Labour, materials, plant and machinery will be sourced locally as far as possible. Secondary economic benefits are expected during the construction phase due to the accommodation, food, and fuel requirements of the construction team.

Waiinu Energy Park will create a substantial number of additional jobs during the construction period, with an estimated 450 to 550 direct full-time equivalent jobs at the peak of construction activities. It is estimated the indirect employment benefit to the region would be an additional 60 full-time equivalent jobs.

The local community will benefit socially and economically during operations as the project will provide jobs to support ongoing operations and maintenance for the estimated 35-year lifetime of the project. Up to 20 direct full-time equivalent jobs will be created for the lifetime of the project.

Due to the large over dimension size of components that are required on site, local secondary roading networks are routinely upgraded providing a lasting benefit of improved efficiency and safety.

The proposed project will enable diversification of land-use and income to the nine landowner farms which will be compatible with existing and modified farming activity.

For generation development sites, Meridian operates a community fund (Meridian Power Up Community Fund). Each year, Meridian put their financial support where it is needed with the help of local Power Up panels, made up of community members who together choose which initiatives should receive funding. In the past 16 years, Meridian has undertaken a wide range of local projects, investing more than s 9(2)(b)(ii) into over 1,250 projects. If this proposal proceeds to construction a fund would be established for the local community with appropriate annual committed funding.

The Power Up Fund is an example of Meridian's commitment to contribute to the viability and vitality of the communities in which it operates, and in which its staff live. It is anticipated that over the course of the development of this project, Meridian would be able to similarly engage with the wider Waitootara and Waiinu Beach community to ascertain where best to assist the community to achieve its aspirations.

Will the project support primary industries, including aquaculture?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

It will enable additional diverse use of existing primary production land.

Will the project support development of natural resources, including minerals and petroleum?

No

Please explain your answer here:

Will the project support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

The project will make a significant contribution (up to 2,000GWh) to increasing renewable energy generation.

New Zealand faces an unprecedented need to develop new generation to meet its climate change mitigation objectives, while maintaining security of supply at least cost possible. Around 1,250GWh of new renewable generation will be required on average every year until 2050.

For additional context, an average of 380GWh of new renewable generation was commissioned annually in the 30 years to 2020, much of that was from geothermal and thermal sources. As such, New Zealand will need to be constructing around 300% more generation every year until 2050 than it has been over the past 30 years.

The need to get new renewable projects up and running will only become more urgent. Adding up to 2,000GWh annual energy generation through the development and operation of the Waiinu Energy Park will add a significant amount of new renewable electricity to the National Grid.

An increasingly renewable electricity and energy system in New Zealand that is secure and delivered at least cost is a competitive advantage for New Zealand export oriented businesses.

Will the project support adaptation, resilience, and recovery from natural hazards?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

The site is not located in an area prone to climate change disruptive events and natural hazards and so should be able to continue to produce power when the site has sufficient wind and/or during daylight. In the event of natural hazards occurring, Meridian anticipates the renewable energy park, consisting of wind turbines, solar arrays, and battery energy storage system, to be part of the solution, continuing to generate and deliver power to the National Grid during a disaster and recovery period. New generation from diverse means and in diverse locations helps to provide resilience to regions and communities when recovery from disaster occurs – this was demonstrated following cyclone Gabrielle.

Will the project address significant environmental issues?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

The project is a significant contribution to climate change mitigation and the electrification of New Zealand's economy.

Is the project consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies?

Yes

Please explain your answer here:

Waiinu Energy Park will achieve the objectives of a number of NPS and NES. Waiinu Energy Park is consistent with the applicable Central (statutory and non-statutory), Regional and Local Government plans and strategies. While the wholesale electricity system is not centrally planned the project is consistent with existing rural zoning and matches the proximity and availability of capacity in the national grid.

Anything else?

Please write your answer here:

Does the project include an activity which would make it ineligible?

No

If yes, please explain:

Section 8: Climate change and natural hazards

Will the project be affected by climate change and natural hazards?

No

If yes, please explain:

The site is not anticipated to be affected by climate change nor natural hazards as the turbines and solar panels are set outside of the Coastal Environment and are well back from the Waitootara river flood plain. An assessment of natural hazard and flood risk will be completed as necessary to evaluate and mitigate these risks.

Section 9: Track record

Please add a summary of all compliance and/or enforcement actions taken against the applicant by any entity with enforcement powers under the Acts referred to in the Bill, and the outcome of those actions.

Please write your answer here:

Meridian has operational assets comprising seven hydro stations, six wind farms, and a BESS (under construction) across New Zealand with a market capitalisation reported in the 2023 Integrated Annual Report of **s 9(2)(b)(ii)**. Since the company's inception in 1999, Meridian has never been prosecuted. Meridian has an excellent track record of investing in and responsibly building and operating electricity generation infrastructure. Meridian is a constituent of the 2023 S&P Global Dow Jones Asia Pacific Sustainability Index (announced December 2023).

Load your file here:

No file uploaded

Declaration

Do you acknowledge your submission will be published on environment.govt.nz if required

Yes

By typing your name in the field below you are electronically signing this application form and certifying the information given in this application is true and correct.

Please write your name here:

Andrew Guerin

Important notes